

# Documents on Diplomacy: Resources

## "Weak" at Yalta: February 4-11, 1945

The meetings opened with the knowledge that victory over Germany was imminent and that Japan was faltering. The discussions were to center on six issues: the occupation of Germany, reparations, the status of Eastern Europe, creation of the United Nations, territorial arrangements in the Far East, and Poland.

Roosevelt had his new Secretary of State, Edward R. Stettinius, at his side. At the time, no one understood how grave Roosevelt's condition was, but both photos and the remarks of those who saw him reported a weak, haggard appearance. He appeared impatient and weary and seemed ready to patch quick agreements.

The daily sessions were not long, maybe four or five hours, then each would confer with his delegation. All would dine together, offering toasts related to the day's discussions. These proceedings would cause controversy for years, especially when news of the "secret deals" were made public.

**Day One:** (February 4) Roosevelt and Stalin agreed that peace was to be made by the Great Powers and not by the small ones. Churchill wanted a Russian assault on Danzig.

**Day Two:** (February 5) Soviets ask for an Allied attack on German communications in the Berlin–Leipzig–Dresden area. It was agreed. They discussed the political future of Germany including five separate zones of occupation. Roosevelt had presented this idea originally at the meeting in Teheran. They agreed to a reparations committee to handle the reparations for Germany.

**Day Three:** (February 6) The Big Three discussed the world organization that they wanted to create. Then they discussed the situation in Poland and the new, westerly borders that Stalin wanted. They discussed "full and free elections" for Poland. Roosevelt remarked that Poland had been a source of trouble for hundreds of years and he thereby had a distant view of the matter. Churchill spent the rest of the days at Yalta trying to get free elections for Poland.

**Day Four:** (February 7) Churchill proposed that the Soviet Union have three seats in the new United Nations Assembly: one for Russia, one for Byelorussia and one for the Ukraine. Another discussion centered on how far to the west the borders of Poland should be. Stalin prevailed; the border would include the German City of Breslau, once part of Prussia.

**Day Five:** (February 8) Stalin wanted only those states that had declared war on Germany to be invited to first meeting of the United Nations Conference on April 25.

Churchill wanted Turkey invited if she declared war. She did. The conference then turned again to the free elections in Poland with Churchill arguing for the removal of the Lublin Government. Stalin promised free elections, and Roosevelt asked how soon. Stalin promised that elections would be held within a month (This never happened, breaking the Anglo-Soviet alliance.) They ended this day's session with a discussion of Greece. Stalin said he would not interfere.

**Day Six:** (February 9) Stalin agreed to allow British and American observers to monitor the elections in Poland. He also gave an assurance

on Yugoslavia and to persuade ruler Tito to hold an Assembly of National Liberation among all the pre-war political parties. They ended this session discussing treatment of war criminals. Stalin earlier had wanted to execute them all, but agreed to the judicial process sought by Churchill. Roosevelt did not want the results to be "too judicial" with photographers and journalists excluded.

**Day Seven:** (February 10) Stalin and Churchill met privately to discuss the treatment of their prisoners of war with assurances of good will to either. They also agree to allow Russian warships in the Dardanelles. Again the Big Three discussed the future borders of Poland and agreed to "substantial territorial accessions in the west" while the actual line would be determined later. (It was later set when the Russian Army reached the line that Stalin wanted.) A final secret assurance was made that the Soviet Union would declare war on Japan as soon as possible after the Germans were defeated.

**Day Eight:** (February 11) The Big Three met at noon to sign a "Declaration on Liberated Europe."

Churchill left that night, but later met Roosevelt on his American heavy cruiser *Quincy* at sea near Alexandria on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Churchill noted that Roosevelt had a "slender contact with life." It was their last time together.

Journalists called the conference a "New Dawn of Civilization." On March 1, Roosevelt, appearing weak and frail, appeared before Congress to report on the work of Yalta. He had to sit because of his health. Franklin Roosevelt died just a few weeks later on April 12<sup>th</sup> from a cerebral hemorrhage.

### Sources:

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